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# Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley

## Alignment Study



## Project Update

The Idaho 55 – Smiths Ferry to Round Valley Alignment Study began in late 1999. The purpose of the study is to select a roadway option that will improve safety, decrease congestion, address environmental and cultural concerns, and accommodate for the future. Because of the potential for significant environmental impacts, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared.

*Alternatives E2N and Improve Existing (40 mph) dropped from consideration in the Draft EIS.*

The study has three essential elements – environmental studies, engineering evaluations and public involvement. Public input has helped the transportation department identify issues, develop options and evaluate alternatives. Five alternatives, plus a “no build” option were previously identified through three rounds of public workshops, and meetings with state and federal agencies.

Project officials have been working to complete the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS is a document that provides a detailed description of the proposed project, the existing environment and an analysis of the anticipated benefits and effects of all reasonable alternatives.

Earlier this year, the transportation department in cooperation with state and federal agencies agreed to drop alternatives E2N and X1 from detailed consideration in the Draft EIS. Environmental studies and engineering evaluations showed that these alternatives have greater impacts to the natural and human environment without offsetting advantages or benefits. The new map on the inside only shows the alternatives being carried forward.

## Study Goals

Identify issues

Identify regulatory barriers

Develop options

Select desired options

Spring 2004





# What has happened since the last public meeting?

A public meeting was held in Spring 2003. The meeting provided the public with an opportunity to examine the environmental impacts of each alternative and provide comments. Displays provided information about the project including archeological, historical, recreation and land use, and wildlife impacts of each alternative. The overall environmental study process was also illustrated. Project officials answered questions and discussed concerns the public had about the alternatives.

Project officials continue to work on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Draft EIS is a document that provides a detailed description of the proposed project, the existing environment and an analysis of the anticipated benefits and effects of all reasonable alternatives.

This effort requires on-going coordination with many federal and state agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Idaho Division of Environmental Quality, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the Idaho Department of Water Resources and the Idaho State Historical Society's Historic Preservation Office.

In order to complete the Draft EIS, project officials have worked on several tasks over the past year. They include:

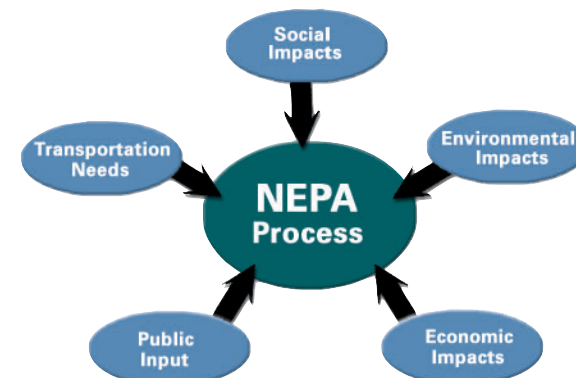
- Writing and reviewing the preliminary Draft EIS.
- Studying the potential impacts to environmental resources including: endangered species, wetlands, archeological sites, recreation areas, land use, traffic, noise, aesthetics, homes and businesses.
- Analyzing the potential impacts that will result from increases in traffic due to Tamarack Resort and updating traffic forecasts for Idaho 55.

## What's Next?

Project officials will use the new traffic forecasts to complete the Draft EIS. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will then publish the Draft EIS for public review, and a public hearing will be held. The anticipated publishing date is later this year.

Information about the upcoming public hearing will be placed in area newspapers and notification will be sent to everyone on the project mailing list. Comments and suggestions from the public, local officials, and state and federal agencies will be addressed. Following response to all comments the Idaho Transportation Department and the FHWA will select the preferred alternative, and the Final EIS will be prepared and published for review. The selection of the preferred alternative and responses to comments will be documented in the Final EIS.

# Where Do I Fit In?



**Social, environmental and economic impacts balanced with transportation needs and public input help shape the decisions and outcomes under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).**

## Public Agency Input Group

The Public Agency Input Group is made up of state and federal regulatory agencies. Its function is to identify issues, concerns and regulations related to the Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley project. The group also plays an important role in deciding which options should be carried forward and in selecting the preferred alternative.

## Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley Team

The Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley Team is a group of citizens and local officials who represent the interests and concerns of environmental associations, recreational groups, businesses, neighborhoods, and property owners that could be affected by the Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley project.

The team has helped identify issues, brainstorm route options and recommend options to be evaluated in the Draft EIS. It is made up of a cross-section of interested citizens from various social and economic groups within the project area.

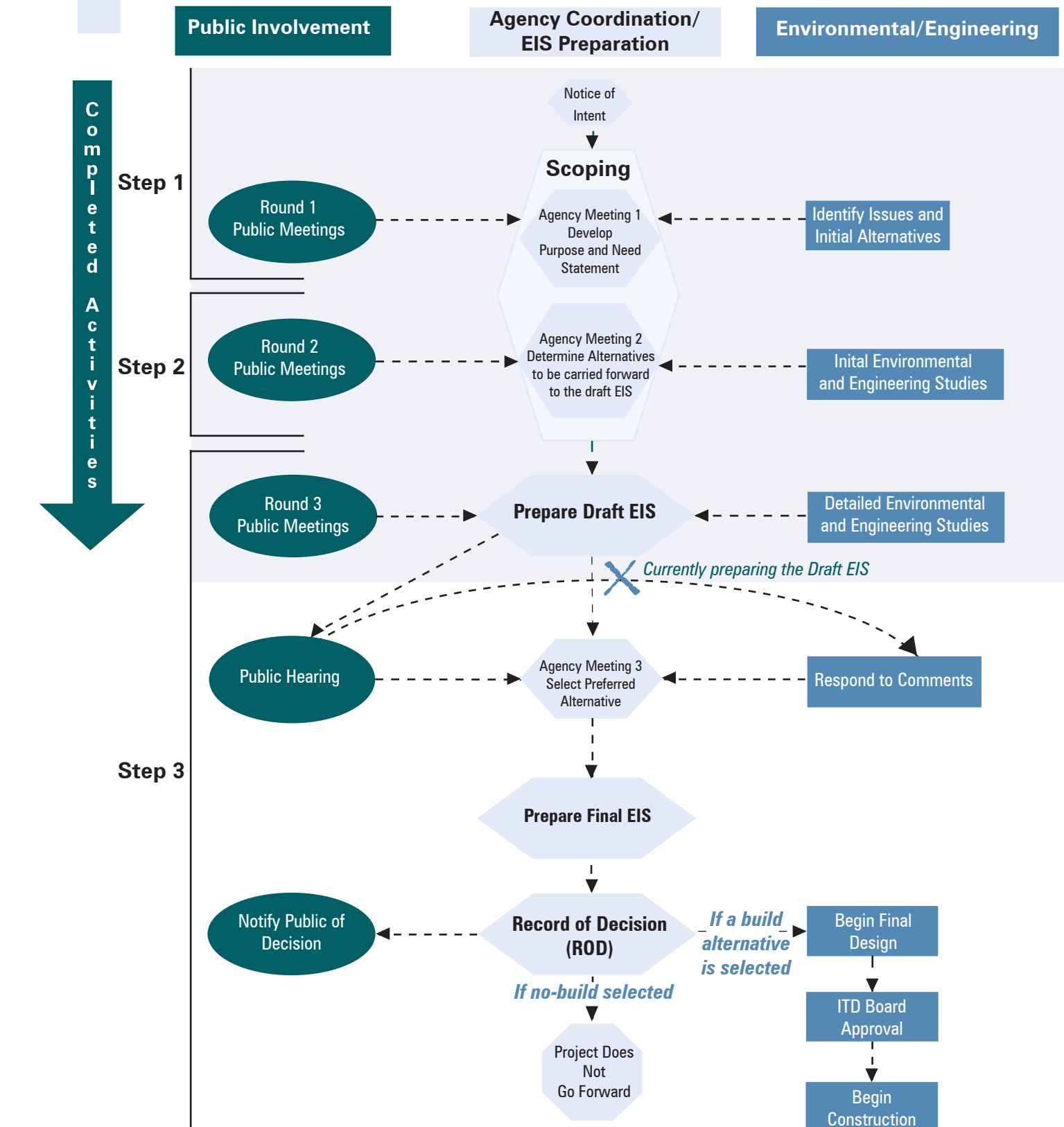
## General Public

The public has been invited to participate in three Idaho 55 - Smiths Ferry to Round Valley workshops. Participants at the first workshop helped the transportation department identify project-related issues and developed route options. During the second workshop, the public helped determine which options should be carried forward for further study. During the third workshop, the public provided comments on the options. Then in the Spring of 2003, an informational meeting was held to update the public on the project's status and to help explain the environmental process.

A public hearing will be held when the Draft EIS is completed and published.

## The Process

## The National Environmental Policy Act and Section 404 Merger Process



## Glossary

**Notice of Intent** - The Notice of Intent is prepared for publication in the *Federal Register*, a daily legal newspaper that contains federal agency regulations. The Notice of Intent announces to the public and interested agencies that a project is being developed and that an EIS will be prepared.

**Scoping** - The formal coordination process required by the NEPA process to assist in determining the scope of the project and the major issues related to the proposed action.

**Record of Decision** - The Record of Decision is issued by the Federal Highway Administration. It allows an agency, like the transportation department, to proceed to final design and construction.